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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003754

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FALLUJAH: WORD ON THE STREET REGARDING CONSTITUTION AND COALITION PRESENCE

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

**¶1.** (C) SUMMARY: Two Fallujah residents, an engineer and a lawyer told us that Anbar residents remain mobilized for the upcoming referendum, heeding calls by religious and tribal leaders to register and participate. Both men expressed opposition in principle to the Coalition presence in Iraq, along with acknowledgement that an immediate departure would not be in the best interests of the Iraqi people. The engineer added that as long as Americans remained in Iraq, "Zarqawi terrorists will be here." END SUMMARY.

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CONSTITUTION: WE ARE REALISTIC,  
BUT DO NOT FORCE IT ON US  
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**¶2.** (C) Engineer Abd Farouk -- an unsuccessful candidate for Fallujah mayor -- told Fallujah Poloff and Marine Foreign Area Officer August 31 that Fallujans will vote in large numbers in the upcoming referendum. Residents had followed calls by religious and other leaders to register. He acknowledged that Sunni refusal to participate in the January 30 election had been a mistake and would not be repeated. Farouk claimed Sunni Arabs were pragmatic about changes they wanted in the constitution, stating "we cannot get all of our demands . . . we are working for the good of the whole country, not just part of it." Farouk added, however, that if the constitution were "forced" on Sunni Arabs, there would be increased tension and problems. In his words, "We do not want civil war. Only a small group wants that, but you must see that there is a balance of good and evil. If things are not done correctly in the constitution, more people will be attracted to the evil."

**¶3.** (C) Farouk would not specifically address whether Sunnis considered their current political hand to be strong or weak. He did, however, point out that eyes were looking beyond October, to the December election, stating: "we know that we can recoup our rights in December." The constitution, he added, represented the future; Sunnis must enter into the political realm; "we will join the police, the army." Farouk underscored the rule of law that a more balanced constitution would guarantee. He concluded, "we must be part of this rule; we must defend our interests. We are pragmatic now."

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U.S. FORCES: LEAVE, BUT NOT YET;  
DON'T TELL US HOW TO RUN IRAQ  
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**¶4.** (C) Muslih offered largely critical comments about the ongoing U.S. military presence in Iraq. "You detain us, you kill us, you destroy our cities . . . is this democracy? I am not saying I would go back, but if you want a comparison, there it is." Muslih stressed that dialogue between the U.S. and Iraqis offered a lot more than the use of the military. He would not ask Americans to leave now -- but added "we need more discussion." Farouk, similarly, conceded that Sunnis did not want Americans to leave suddenly.

**¶5.** (C) Farouk expressed disappointment over what he perceived to be failed U.S. promises, particularly in governance areas. He stated flatly that "we did not need your ideas about governing; yes, we want your technology and science, but not ideas how to run this country."

16. (C) Poloff countered by reminding both Fallujans that other Iraqis might have a different view about who was better or worse off before, under Saddam -- and that governance should reflect the interests of all people, not just some.

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ZARQAWI: WEAKENED WITHOUT STANDING;  
REJECT FOREIGNERS, INCLUDING "YOU"  
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17. (C) Engineer Farouk stated that Zarqawi and his followers had been weakened. However, he said the continued U.S. presence provided a "pretext" for terrorist activities. Farouk said Fallujah residents had not seen foreign fighters in the city "with our own eyes, but their thoughts are present and we hear them." He added, pointedly, that as long as Americans remained in Iraq, "Zarqawi terrorists will be here. We are the victims between the two of you. We do not accept foreign fighters, and that includes you all."

18. (C) Poloff and Marine FAO replied that a major part of Iraq's insurgent problem is home-grown, not directed by foreign terrorists. Moving fellow Iraqi Sunnis away from terrorist activities would do a great deal to improve Iraq's security.

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ITG: DISCONNECTED FROM THE PEOPLE;  
FALLUJAH AS IRAQ'S GORDIAN KNOT  
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19. (C) Muslih criticized Baghdad officials for being unwilling/unable to leave the Green Zone to meet people, adding "we want rulers who can walk the streets and meet us." Muslih added that Fallujah represented a key challenge -- "the hardest Gordian knot to solve" -- a view, he said, that was shared by many in Iraq.

10. (C) COMMENT: Engineer Farouk and Lawyer Muslih reinforced in these conversations that Sunni Arabs in Fallujah, for now, have prioritized the political track. While they do not welcome the ongoing coalition presence, both acknowledged that a sudden departure would lead to greater instability.  
Satterfield